

# *The* **History of Milford, Nebr.**



*Milford, Nebr.'s Centennial*  
*1864 ~ 1964*

*Celebration July 2, 3, & 4*



## *Acknowledgement:*

*We wish to acknowledge and thank the following persons who compiled the facts and pictures for our Centennial book:*

**Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Wertman**

**[REDACTED]**

**Dr. J. Stanley Welch**





WORKERS LAYING FIRST BRICK WHEN MAIN STREET  
IN MILFORD WAS PAVED, SCENE IN FRONT OF NORTON  
HOTEL, JUST WEST OF YOST LUMBER COMPANY.



WHERE RIVER WAS FORDED



MR. W C. SMILEY BUILT THIS LIVERY BARN  
IN 1879, WHERE LAB'S BODY SHOP IS LOCATED  
MR. SMILEY IN CHAIR  
JOE SILSBY ED KLEIN.



JACOB H. CULVER.

AMONG THE NOTABLE WORKERS IN THE INTEREST OF MILFORD , THOSE WHO WERE EVER READY TO FIGHT HER BATTLES, WE MUST FIRST MENTION HONORABLE J.L. DAVISON, THE FOUNDER OF MILFORD WHICH OCCURED IN THE YEAR 1864. HISTORY TELLS US THAT MR. DAVISON WAS ONE OF THEBEST CITIZENS THAT SEWARD COUNTYEVER POSSESSED.

AMONG OTHERS MENTIONED WAS HON . JACOB H. CULVER WHO WORKED HAND IN HAND WITH MR. DAVISON WHO TOGETHER BROUGHT ABOUT MUCH OF THE PROGRESS OF OUR LITTLE TOWN. IT IS OF MR. CULVER WE ARE WRITING THIS ARTICLE, SINCE WE FEEL WE OWE HIM A GREAT DEAL.

JACOB H. CULVER WAS BORN IN OHIO IN 1845, THEN MOVED TO WISCONSIN WHEN ONLY 2 YEARSOLD. THE LAD RECEIVED HIS EARLY TRAININGTHERE WHILE LIVING WITH HIS FATHER WHO WAS ENGIGED IN THE LUMBER BUSINESS. AT THE AGE OF SIXTEEN HE ENLISTED IN COMPANY ( K ) OF THE FIRST WISCONSIN INFANTRY AND SERVED ONE YEAR. AMONG OTHER BATTLES IN WHICH HE SERVEDWERE CHICKAMAUGA, MISSION RIDGE,LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN,CHATTANOOGA, AND OTHERS.

RETURNING FROM THE WAR HE ENTERED WISCONSIN UNIVERSITY IN 1866. IN 1870 HE CAME TO SEWARD COUNTY AND MADE MILFORD HIS HOME. HE SERVED AS POSTMASTER





WILFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT AND CARPENTER  
SHOP OF MR. JOHN KLEIN, FATHER OF  
MAUD WERTMAN.



MR. ALEXANDER'S DRUG STORE \*\*\*\* 1908  
BEHIND THE COUNTER MR. ALEXANDER  
DR. WERTMAN AND MRS. WERTMAN



MR. J. S. DILLENBECK

A FARMER LIVING 3

MILES EAST OF MILFORD

FOUND TRACES OF GOLD

ON HIS FARM AND MADE

EVERY EFFORT TO

DEVELOPE THE MINE.

NOT MUCH GOLD WAS EVER

FOUND ALTHOUGH SEVERAL

ATTEMPTS WERE MADE

LATER BY OTHER

PROSPECTORS,



EXCURSION TRIPS BROUGHT  
MANY PEOPLE FROM  
LINCOLN AND OMAHA TO  
PLACE WHERE GOLD WAS  
SUPPOSED TO BE FOUND,





MILFORD GARAGE NOW OCCUPIED BY LAURENCE



MILFORD MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST AS IT APPEARED EARLY IN THE CENTURY  
 DR. WERTMAN, JOHN TRABERT, SEATED IN CAR, SOME OF THE TRABERT CHILDREN  
 STANDING NEAR THE CAR. SAMUELSON'S DRUG STORE AT LEFT.



LITTLE PRIMARY DRILL TEAM  
IN MILFORD SCHOOL  
DAN WEAVER AS. LEADER.



HIGH SCHOOL ROOM IN FIRST OLD  
MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING  
SOME OF THE PUPILS ARE, VINCENT STAHL,  
MATILDA KLEIN, IDA BRANDON, ETTA REED,  
IZORA HOLLINGSWORTH, ANNA ANDERSON,  
JOE SILSBY, CLIFFORD FUNK, TOM SAMPLE,  
ELWIN CULVER, FLORENCE BISHOP.  
LOUIE ENGELFADT.





MILLDAM IN EARLY DAYS WHEN A TRESSEL WAS BUILT  
ACROSS THE DAM TO TRANSPORT GRAIN AND MATERIALS  
ACROSS THE RIVER TO RAILROAD TO BE SHIPPED.



YOUNG MEN ENJOYING A HOME TALENT PRIZE FIGHT  
DOWN BY THE STOCK YARDS OF MR. TODD.





J. H. PERKINSON REAL ESTATE DEALER AND LAWYER  
Also served as adjutant at soldier's home.



FIRST SOLDIERS AND SAILORS HOME  
ration day services were usually held here.  
kids loved to run around these steps and porches



SHOWING THE TWO ORIGINAL BRIDGES ACROSS THE BLUE RIVER,  
THE ONE AT THE RIGHT OF PICTURE IS STILL STANDING,  
BUT THE OTHER ONE WAS TORN OUT AND ONE  
BUILT FARTHER WEST ON THE HIGHWAY.



EAST OF PARK LOOKING NORTH  
OLD METHODIST CHURCH, AND OLD MASONIC HALL AT LEFT.



LOOKING NORTH ON E STREET  
OLD TOWN HALL AND OLD MASONIC HALL  
above at left of picture next to this  
Building now occupied by Holland Hortuary.





MR. DAN WABNEE'S STORE

Mr. Wabne in center, Mr. Haverstock at left  
Mrs. Rhode Marks behind the counter on right



OUTSIDE OF WABNEE STORE



ED FUNK STORE  
ON THE CORNER ACROSS THE EAST BRIDGE  
ON LOT WHERE BEN PEDIGER NOW LIVES.



MR. JOHN HAVERSTOCK, Drayman





RILEY WRIGHT  
Taking pictures from roof  
of M. H. S.



LOOKING NORTHEAST FROM TOP OF SCHOOLHOUSE.





SARATOGA HOTEL, OWNED BY MR. MCCARTHY  
JUST SOUTH OF SCHLEGEL'S STORE  
AFTER IT BURNED, A CORNER OF TH STORE  
IS VISIBLE IN THE PICTURE.



BAND DOME IN PARK MILFORD



SCENES OF GRAIN THRESHING YEARS AGO  
ON THE A.L. BRANDHORST FARM.



CUTTING ICE ON RIVER TO BE STORED  
FOR SUMMER USE



DR. AND MRS. MUIR WITH THEIR FIRST GRAND CHILD,  
DR. MUIR WAS ONE OF OUR LEADING DOCTORS  
IN MILFORD FOR MANY YEARS.





FROZEN MILL DAM.



SUBWAY UNDER RAILROAD EAST  
END OF MAIN STREET



SCENES OF GRAIN THRESHING YEARS AGO  
OF THE E.L. BRANDHORST FARM.



MILL DAM, A good place to fish



ORIGINAL MILL AND DAM





MRS. D. F. TODD(ne) STUMP, WHO FOR MANY YEARS TAUGHT PRIMARY GRADES IN MILFORD SCHOOL, NOTE THE PICTURE HAT WORN IN THOSE DAYS.



D.F. TODD AS MILFORD BAND LEADER ALSO AS DASHING PHOTOGRAPHER.

*Todd as Milford Photographer*



MILFORD SCHOOL IN 1898  
FIRST SCHOOL WAS BUILT IN 1886

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

JOHN HOLLINGSWORTH, CHARLES RUMLER, A.J. WEAVER  
WM. TRIMBLE, C.G. LEWIS, JOSEPH SWEARINGEN.



MILFORD, SCHOOL HOUSE AFTER FIRST REMODELING  
STEPS ACROSS THE WHOLE EAST SIDE OF BUILDING  
WERE REMOVED AND STEPS WITH RAILING WERE  
BUILT LEADING TO EAST DOOR.





THRESHING SCENE IN EARLY DAYS.



WEST OF MILL DAM WHERE WE  
WENT TO GO FISHING AND BOATING.





RIVER SCENE



WHERE RIVER WAS FORDED.



VIEWING COUNTRY ON RAILROAD AS TRAIN  
APPROACHED THE OLD DEPOT ACROSS THE RIVER.



SHOGO ISLAND UP RIVER WEST AND NORTH OF DAM  
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS USED TO SKATE UP TO THE  
ISLAND AND HAVE WEINER ROAST AND SKATE BACK,  
MANY PICNICS WERE HELD ON SHOGO ISLAND.





WEAVER PLUMBING AND HEATING SUPPLIES  
MR. AL. WEAVER AND MR. DAN WEAVER



FOURTH OF JULY PARADE ON MAIN STREET  
TRAVELING EAST.





HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EARLY DAYS

AMELIA KLEIN, STELLA NEWTON, NETTIE STONE, HETTY BORDEN,  
 VIOLA BORDEN, PEARL WELCH, HARRY LANDIS, (JUDGE), FRANK HINTZ,  
 FLORA BOWLER, ANNA HOUCHEEN, EVA TODD, OLLIE KISER, ZINA NORTON,  
 ELWIN CULVER, WALT NEWTON, ANDREA RUNNALS, IDA SCHAFF, DORA SCHAFF  
 FRANK STUMP, JULIA ANDREWS, ANNAOVERHOLTZ, STANLEY WELCH(DOCTOR) .



MILFORD FIRST FOOTBALL TEAM,  
 STANDING, COACH, LEE JOHNSON, ED KLEIN, WILL SNARE, JOE KAHLER,  
 HARRY RAYMER, HENRY KAHLER, JOE SILSBY, OMAR GAGE,  
 JIM TINDALL, NELS ANDERSON, CLYDE YORK, CLEVE TRIMBLE.



MR. D. TODD AND JAKE TEUSCHER.



MR. TEUSCHER'S STOCK YARDS  
NEAR SPELTZ ELEVATOR.





TRESSELWORK FOR RAILROAD THROUGH  
MILFORD ON SOUTH SIDE OF RIVER  
BUILT 1907 TO 1909



MR. W . D. ALEXANDER LEADING DRUGIST  
ON NORTH SIDE OF MAIN STREET.





A DARK COVERED RAILROAD BRIDGE ON RAILROAD BETWEEN  
MILFORD AND RUBY NEAR RIVERSIDE PARK.



THE McCARTHY HOTEL, OWNED BY MR. MC CARTHY,  
LOCATED JUST SOUTH OF SCLEGG'S STORE  
WHEN IT BURNED. A CORNER OF THE STORE  
IS VISIBLE IN THE PICTURE.



ORIGINAL SHOGO SPRINGS WITH  
ONLY CRUDE BOARD ROOF.



MILFORD MAIN STREET TAKEN  
FROM EAST LOOKING WEST



LOOKING NORTH EAST FROM TOP OF  
SCHOOL HOUSE, FIRST EVANGELICAL  
CHURCH, SMALL FRAME BUILDING  
AT EXTREME RIGHT OF PICTURE.



MILFORD'S BRICK YARDS, OWNED  
BY THE SAMPLES, LOCATED  
EAST END OF TOWN.





SHOGO SPRINGS MILFORD NEBRASKA.

MR. CULVER PUT IN BOTTLING WORKS AND SENT  
LITHA WATER TO PANAMA CANAL ZONE FOR DRINKING  
PURPOSES WHILE THE CANAL WAS BEING CONSTRUCTED.  
LATER THE BUILDING SEEN HERE WAS BUILT AND BOTH  
WATER AND POP WERE BOTTLED AND SOLD BY  
MR. ROHRIG AND SHIPPED OUT.



MASONIC HALL BUILT 1882



MASONIC TEMPLE BUILT 1927.





SCHOOL HOUSE AFTER FOUR ROOMS WERE BUILT ON EAST  
SIDE OF OLD BUILDING , WHICH IS STILL VISIBLE  
AT EXTREME LEFT OF PICTURE , NEW ADDITION  
STILL FACES EAST.



CROVER SCHOOL  
MISS LUCY SCHAFFER, TEACHER  
THIS SCHOOL HOUSE WAS BOUGHT BY MR. CONNER  
TAKEN DOWN AND REBUILT INTO HOUSE WHERE  
MRS. MAE YOST LIVES IN SOUTH PART OF TOWN





SCENE ALONG HIGHWAY AT EAST END OF MAIN STREET  
NEWTON'S CAFE.



GARAGE AND NEWTON'S CAFE ON HIGHWAY  
EAST END OF MAIN STREET.



BRIDGES OVER COON CREEK SOUTH OF SOLDIERS HOME  
LATER NEBRASKA TRADE SCHOOL





THE EVANGELICAL CHIRCH MILFORD



MISS CORA ALLEY, TEACHER, WHO WAS THE FIRST  
GRADUATE OF MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL , IN 1888  
SHE TAUGHT IN MILFORD SCHOOL  
FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS





WORKERS LAYING FIRST BRICKS WHEN MAIN STREET  
IN MILFORD WAS PAVED, SCENE IN FRONT OF THE  
NORTON HOTEL JUST WEST OF YOST LUMBER YARD.



SCENE ON COON CREEK, MILFORD, NEBRASKA



LOOKING WEST FROM TOP OF SCHOOL HOUSE.



MOVING THE ELEVATOR ACROSS THE RIVER  
FROM GROVER TO SOUTH SIDE OF RIVER.









OLD DEPOT ACROSS THE RIVER  
BOYS ARE READY TO ENTRAIN FOR SPANISH WAR.



JOHN HAVERSTOCK, DRAYMAN  
MR. PUMPHREY, STATION AGENT.  
TOM SAMPLE, VISITOR.



GRAIN GOING TO SPELTS ELEVATOR  
LOCATED NEAR EAST OF OLD DEPOT.



MILFORD STOCK YARDS \*\* 1899  
DOWN NEAR SPELTS ELEVATOR.





MILFORD WAS UNFORTUNATE

ENOUGHTO SUFFER A

TORNADO IN THE EVENING

OF APRIL, 1957, the

SOUTH AND EASTERN

PART OF TOWN SUFFERED

HEAVIEST DAMAGE,

PICTURES SHOW THE

GREAT DEVASTATION.



NO LIVES WERE LOST

A FEW WERE INJURED.

PROPERTY LOSS WAS

EXTREMELY HEAVY.







PICTURES

OF

THE

TORNADO

CONTINUED





WATER OVER THE HIGHWAY IN FRONT OF KENNETH STAHLY HOME. THE RIVER OVER FLOWED AND SENT WATER OVER THE AREA UP TO THE CORNER OF THE PINES.



WATER AROUND SHED IN THE STAHLY YARD DURING THE SAME FLOOD. FIVE INCHES OF RAIN IN LESS THEN TEN HOURS.



WATER AROUND THE HOUSE NOW OCCUPIED BY THE KENNETH STAHLY FAMILY.





MILFORD GRADE SCHOOL FACING WEST  
FORMERLY USED AS OLD HIGH SCHOOL  
UNTIL NEW HIGH SCHOOL WAS BUILT  
IN 1961 AND 1962

## **J. L. DAVIDSON — Founder of Milford**

Milford, Nebraska, was founded in April, 1864, by J. L. Davidson, and was the only settlement in Seward County at the time. The settlement, established as a ranch and trading post, was on the great Steam Wagon Road with the Overland Trail traffic passing through.

The Blue River made Milford a superior water power and provided the power for a mill erected in 1866 by Messers Davidson and Reed.

Milford for many years was the leading town of the county and held the county seat from 1867 until the fall of 1871. It was the only town until 1868 when the town of Seward was surveyed and platted.

In 1888, a book written by W. W. Cox, entitled "History of Seward County, Nebraska" was published wherein we find the following comments concerning the vitality of Seward County, and Milford in particular.

"We are a favored people. Ours is truly a land of milk and honey. Our aggregate wealth surpasses \$10,000 and is constantly growing with the years. Our towns and cities are growing and expanding and are from month to month adding new conveniences and comforts and luxuries to lessen the burdens of all our people. Our progress is the wonder of the age, yet this progression will be accelerated from year to year. We see signs of new life, activity and vigor here, there and everywhere within our borders."

Milford shows new life and activity, valuable improvements and additions to the grain elevators at the mill; a great livery barn that looks large for Omaha; the new sanitorium building; some palatial residences and the final assurance of the new industrial home, a state institution; and with the grade complete, a new railroad connection with Crete and the south, she has much to gladden the hearts of all her sons and daughters.

### **NATURAL CALAMITIES TAKE THEIR TOLL**

The early years of Milford were not all pleasant for many natural calamities took their toll. One such calamity is reported in the early years of Seward county.

In the early days of July, 1874, it was extremely hot and the wheat was seriously damaged so that the yield was light and the quality very poor. Wheat at that time was the main dependence of the farmers and they felt their loss seriously and so a great stagnation of business was the immediate result.

This loss could have been borne, but an invading army came on the wings of the north wind and the sun almost refused to shine and give her light at noonday when the whole sky was a living sea of insect life.

As far as the eye could see and penetrate the sky, there seemed scarcely room for another grasshopper. They had come a long way and were hungry and they proposed to dine with us. We were not pleased with our guests, but little did they care. They came for corn and took what we had; making dessert of our truck gardens, such as cabbage, turnips, onions, and in fact, every living plant, finishing by each taking a chew of green tobacco.

Those who have never seen a swarm of grasshoppers can form no idea of the immensity of their number. We should judge Seward county cannot produce the same heft in cattle in 50 years as we would these insects weight that foraged on our fields, meadows and gardens. This calamity fell like a wet blanket on all interests in the county.

Great numbers of our people were very poor, and the loss of a crop was virtually losing their all. Land depreciated in value and all classes of personal property were a drug on the market, except grain of which there was none to sell, hardly enough for home use.



Hogs sold for as low as one and a half cents per pound and sales were slow at that. Quarter sections of land that would now bring \$4,000 were begging for a market at \$400 to \$800.

Destitution and want stared the people in the face and if it had not been for kind people in the old states, the suffering would have been fearful to contemplate. Thousands of noble men and women came to the rescue and sent their stores of food and clothing and fuel for the relief of the people.

Railroads brought thousands of tons of coal, and merchandise to the doors of the famishing people without money and without price.

### **MILFORD-SEWARD BATTLE FOR COUNTY SEAT**

Always in the settlement of a new region one of the first questions to be settled is the location of a capital. When counties were first formed in the state of Nebraska, without exception, heated controversies broke out as to which town should be the county seat. Seward county was no exception to this rule.

In 1865 the county started to organize and a board of county commissioners was elected. However, the vote on county seat was not taken until 1867.

In October of that year the first vote was taken as to the location of the county seat. Milford led with Seward second and Camden third. All votes cast did not exceed 100 in number.

A special election was then called for a vote between Milford and Seward, with Camden throwing its support in favor of Seward. The returns of this special election tend to show that Seward won.

However, Milford was not finished and in the canvass of the vote made by W. H. Reed it was found that 12 votes in favor of Seward should not have been permitted and Milford was therefore declared the county seat. Four years of litigation was commenced wherein a most bitter dispute was created between Milford and Seward.

According to W. W. Cox, author of "History of Seward County", "not all of the dispute was the result of Seward county actions. We were many times misled by unscrupulous lawyers into snares which cost us dearly."

Milford had possession of the county books and claimed the county seat by virtue of the count made by Reed and his canvassers. Seward folks made a desperate effort to have the election declared in favor of Seward or invalidated and remanded to the vote of the people. Seward was fighting her battle in the courts.

In 1868 Seward fought hard for the election of a state senator from their district who would support their claim in the legislature. Milford threw all its support against the Seward candidate and was able to defeat him.

In the 1870-71 session of the state legislature, Seward slipped into the legislature, unknown to Milford, and received the legislation to have the county seat question brought up once again for a vote of the people.

Realizing that she was outnumbered, Milford threw her weight behind a new location which would be in the exact center of the county. A new project was sprung to locate a new town in the geographical center of Seward county.

On October 10, 1871, Seward was picked as county seat with a 20 vote margin. Milford had split her vote between the new location, Germantown, and lost all the support of Camden.

## REMINISCENCE

J. Stanley Welch

We write in relation to some spots and happenings to the people on the Big Blue River timbered banks since the Nebraska territorial days of 1864. Ages before this date nature had lifted this river's bed of rock to the very near surface of the earth, becoming shallow and smooth in one short stretch, the safest crossing in that entire area.

Thousands, much more likely millions, of savages or scantily civilized Indians had worn a trail to this safe Big Blue River ford. One enlightened citizen named Davidson drove his prairie schooner safely through the waters just as had Lewis and Clark earlier. He made permanent camp nearby. He hewed and sawed timber and built a plain log structure which was not only his home, but later became the first school house.

This same ingenious citizen built a dam a few hundred yards upstream from his first building and constructed a small flour mill. There began the cluster of campers and of shack dwellers whose village was christened with a name; Mill-Ford, Milford, Nebraska.

Commencing in 1868 and in every year since, the "tribe" name of "Welch" has been a part of the archives of Milford, Nebraska. John Welch had driven a drove of sheep from Illinois across Iowa, ferried them at Nebraska City and had then followed the Republican River Valley westward. These routes offered the greatest safety against Indians and the best water and grass en route to market in Canon City, Colorado.

At the Big Blue River in Nebraska, he gave the feet of his sheep a rest and detoured alone on horseback and afoot to Milford. There he shared the enthusiasm of the numerous little groups of prairie schooners westward bound, but he was discouraged by the tales of returning freight haulers and their reports of Indian uprisings and bloody massacres, red against red and red against white.

John Welch finally got his sheep to Canon City, Colorado, but not without event. Once his camp was invaded by a band of escaping, defeated Sioux Indians and a dozen drunken discharged rebel veterans called jaywhackers. Threatened with robbery and perhaps death, he muttoned a sheep for them and piled them liberally with a big bottle. While the renegades drank, ate and slept, he quietly broke camp in the middle of the night.

The trip east from Cheyenne, Wyoming, was made on the Union Pacific Railroad and the Chicago Burlington and Quincy Railroad. He reached his family in Illinois with a good profit and a good knowledge concerning the new American desert west of his new chosen home in Milford.

The day to start westward finally came and the time schedule was close if they were to reach Nebraska for spring planting. All of the horses were harnessed for extra pulling through the Iowa mud and over the Iowa hills. It seemed as if the horses as well as Dad were homesick. They were leaving the best farms in the United States to head for one on the edge of the great American desert and, even at that moment, were simply stuck in the mud. The ferry boats across the Missouri looked rickety, but they were equal to the transport of Dad's ten horses, three milk cows and four covered wagons crammed to the canvas roof with all of the Welch's earthly possessions.

Because the famous Oregon Trail headed due west from Lincoln on A Street, then to the Big Blue River ford and new mill, they followed this much traveled road. With hardly a stop the thirsty horses had soon pulled all the wagons into midstream. There they drank and drank again, stamping happily in the water. "Then they pulled on to that little log cabin of Mr. Davidson", Mother said, "as if the log barn was the next stop for Iowa oats."

I used to love to hear Mother tell the story of their arrival at Milford, how she dug up



the prepared lunches from under the spring seat and everyone ate while the horses and all hands got their first view of our home to be, how Father hitched four horses to the heaviest wagon to assure no trouble on the steep pull from the river edge to the streets of Milford; how the cows were tied to separate wagons; how one playful little colt attracted the town kids like a steam calliope and circus monkeys; how the merchants, blacksmiths, saloon keepers, livery barn men and Mother's two brothers greeted us on the main street. Mother's two brothers, Dee and David Alexander, ran to meet us wearing ink stained aprons, the work clothes from their little printing office.

The Alexanders had known of my parents' arrival and had rented for them the only empty house in the village. This house had two rooms only, but it had a well and a barn and a straw shed. This two room house grew on to itself in the next 92 years two rooms and an attic. It still sits in Milford condemned and recently given to the city fire department for fire fighting practice.

That was our first afternoon on the main street of Milford--an introduction of smiling, cheerful Milford housewives dressed in their kitchen Mother Hubbards drawn in at the waist by apron strings. Next was the main task, establishing a home in a two-room house and one prairie schooner and converting 400 acres of raw prairie land into a productive farm.

During the first decade of that next to impossible task, they watched thousands of less fortunate people roll their wagons back on old route number 6. They would stop at the windmill and big water tank Dad Welch had built at the most available spot. That stream of starving, suffering, defeated great western desert homesteaders had many stories to tell. One of their wagons had scrawled on its top "In God We Trusted, In Kansas We Busted. Back home to mother."

Those 400 Welch acres were only 80 rods west on Milford's main street, but there was not one tree nor one bush fit for fuel. Buffalo and cattle chips were the only things available for burning. Dad was disappointed in this lack of fuel. Coal was available from Kansas and could be hauled from the Missouri River ports or from rail yards in Lincoln and Crete. This had to be hauled by wagon and indeed was hauled for several years. To solve the immediate need for cooking and, of course, the soon to come obligatory need for heating fuel, Dad's brain hatched another productive idea. The very next day John and Mary Welch signed a deed for ten acres of Blue River timber land about one mile north from their two-room house and two miles from the farm. That same ten acre Blue River timber strip ultimately was to become Camp Kiwanis.

A new dam built at the mill raised the mill pond level several feet, creating Shogo Island and furnishing a beautiful waterfront resort for Milford. Beyond Shogo Island the mill pond flooded and in wintertimes froze, killing all vegetation. About an acre of this timber was cleared during the wintertime when the ice was solid enough to permit the weight of horses and wagon. This timber was not a loss since it provided the raw material for fuel, fence posts, stable and cattle shed lumber, all of which were needed. Other lumber on these ten acres was cut by the villagers on shares for years.

Soon the Burlington Railroad built through Milford on its route to Grand Island and Billings, and with the coming of the railroad was a better fuel in carloads--coal.

One cool night in 1878 when the weather had stopped most of the woodsmen, my father was at the timber strip filling a wagon with fuel wood. He had had no supper and was just starting home when he received word that a stork was flying over his house. Knowing that Doctor Brandon was at Beaver Crossing and that the only ones at home were eight-year-old Pearl and two-year-old Andrew, he ran for home. The race was rather even. Dad arrived, the

load of stove wood arrived, and the stork landed at about the same time. My sister, Pearl, managed the obstetrical job, but she held me so close to the stove that my bottom was blistered.

The coming of the Burlington Railroad and its nearness to the Blue River timber land offered some employment for the men from Milford. Also, even before the rails were placed, ice companies in Lincoln, Nebraska, signed a contract for the entire winter crop of ice. The harvest and storage of ice each winter was a familiar activity and provided cash much needed.

One day an Indian chief and two bucks came to the barnyard near our two-room house. A group of Indians were camped near Shogo Springs near the present trade school area. They were to have a wedding feast and wanted two fat pigs for which they were willing to pay five dollars each. The two bucks and Dad's hired man entered the muddy pigpen and tied a rope to the hind leg of each pig so they could be driven to camp. When it came time to pay, the old chief handed Dad a five dollar bill and said, "All poor Indians got." Dad demanded the ten dollars. In the ensuing argument, the pigs were thrown back into the pigpen, the Indians were shoved toward camp, and the chief got a kick in the buckskin.

Dad Welch had reason to dislike Indians. About two years before, near Fort Robinson on the Wounded Knee battleground, his cousin's wife and two blonde daughters aged eight and ten were attacked, lashed to the wagon wheels and scalped. All the victims were then burned. The hired man who accompanied them was out of sight at that time rounding up the horses for an early start in the cool morning. Seeing smoke he crawled to the brim of a hill just in time to see the Indians hurrying away. Riding bareback to Denver, which was nearly a hundred miles away, the hired man met in a saloon a group of discharged U. S. Cavalry men. When he had told his story, the ex-colonel asked for twenty volunteers to return to the scene. Rightly or wrongly, they followed the Indians' trail and killed them to a man.

Milford progressed. About 1889 the Milford Cavalry was called into service in northwest Nebraska at the time the Sioux Indians surrendered and were moved to a reservation in South Dakota. I believe General Jacob Culver was their commandant.

The middle 1890's were strenuous times, but there were interesting occurrences too. One of these interesting occurrences involved that ten acres of wooded land used by my father to provide fuel as a replacement for the ever decreasing buffalo chips. These buffalo leavings were fast disappearing as the huge herds of bison were slaughtered by William Cody and Company and others.

Nearly 500 displaced Ponca Indians migrated from north of Omaha on the Missouri toward more dry acres of land in the western Indian territories. These Poncas camped for a while on the horseshoe bend timber strip where they could find shelter, fuel and food. The Indians were usually well treated at Milford and with a familiar camping spot on the timber land we learned to know more of them. On one visit a young daughter of a friendly chief was known to be dying with tuberculosis. The accompanying Indian agents compelled the tribe to move along until they arrived at Camden, Nebraska, where Beautiful Prairie Flower died. Upon the death of the chief's daughter the Indians insisted upon returning to Milford to bury her. My mother made a new dress to clothe her, and Mrs. Joe Borden prepared the body. A coffin was made by a carpenter in Milford.

### **RAILROAD SERVICE COMES TO MILFORD**

After the question of the county seat in Seward county was determined, the question of railroad service was brought before the people. During this period of history the general



method to bring a road through a town was that the country being served would finance the road by general purpose bonds. The proceeds of the bond issue being used to pay for the construction of the road. An early article on the history of Seward County tells of the first bond election.

"The old bitterness was manifested again in this contest. Every family in the county was visited and the most desperate struggle ensued. Milford in her fit of anger made a most fatal mistake, seriously blundered, and it well might cost her life. She was in splendid condition to have fairly rivaled Seward had she taken the tide at its flood. Milford voted not to take the railroad to her boundaries, but instead leave the road to Seward with its resulting bonded indebtedness. The cars rolled into Seward on March 1, 1873 and the future of Seward was secure. It took years for Milford to be connected to a railway line and in that time Seward carved out an economic advantage Milford has never been able to catch."

The first regular train to Milford went out October 21, 1879, according to the "Daily State Journal" of October 23, 1879. Regular trains were to run thereafter according to the following time table: leave Lincoln at 10 a.m. and 3:20 p.m.; arriving at Milford at 12:35 p.m. and 5:05 p.m.; leaving Milford to return at 1 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

F. S. Hazelton was the first agent for the L. & NW. R. R. at Milford

### **GOLD FIELDS IN MILFORD AREA**

The discovery of gold north of Milford in 1895 caused much excitement in the area, according to excerpts from "The Crete Democrat" and the "Milford Nebraskan", issues of October 11, 1895.

"There is now much excitement on the discovery of gold north of town. Many people from Lincoln and other places have visited the "diggings", some bought land, others taking options and the prices of farms in that section is rapidly advancing.

"One farmer, J. S. Dillenbeck, three miles east of Milford has an 800 acre farm and on this knoll of about 40 acres which has a stratum of sand that has assayed from \$70.00 to \$196.00 per ton. If the whole is as rich as it has tested, there are millions of dollars of gold on the knoll. . ."

From the Journal in the "Milford Nebraskan": "A man stands ready to take the J. S. Dillenbecks homestead (80 acres) at \$1,000 per acre, if he would take it. A Chicago man told them Wednesday that if the sample he took showed gold as others had there will be plenty of cash to open up the mine. J. S. Dillenbeck has started a shaft 4 by 7 going to quartz rock."

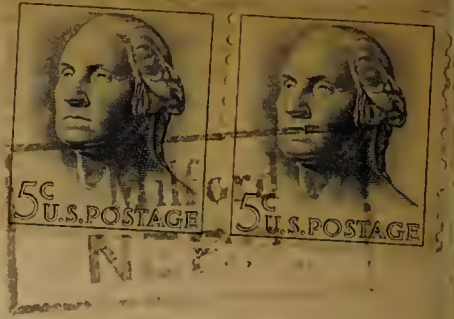
As the "gold rush" continued, the paper reported on October 25, 1895: "228 people are reported to have come to our gold mines on the special train last Sunday and probably four times as many on foot, wheels and by teams. It was a great crowd. . .

"We have not much gold news this week, but we hear some more miners have arrived and are at work to get the precious yellow out."

Herbert Bartlett, mining engineer, reported in the State Journal, November 8, 1895, that after inspecting the gravel deposit he found gravel gold bearing claim miles in extent and that much of it was fabulously rich, and that taking it all together, it was equal in extent, vaster in depth and richer in value than any similar deposit in the world.







BOXHOLDER  
RURAL ROUTE